# The Proposed Synopsis for Ph.D. Work

# Topic

## Sufism and Inter-religious Understanding : An Analysis in Indian View Point

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## INTRODUCTION :

Both Philosophy and Religion are the inevitable parts of human life and society as well. Once of a time both were intimately connected as a regulating force of human life and the promotion of human understanding. Values and moral principles are the guiding force of our society and life to live in peace. Thereafter Philosophy of religion appears as a distinct discipline which deals mainly to analyze religion in rational way.

The philosophy of religion was at one time generally understood to mean religious philosophizing in the sense of the philosophical defense of religious conviction. Its program was to demonstrate rationally the religious issues like the existence of God, thus preparing the way for the claims of revelation. Philosophy of religion is not a branch of theology, but a branch of philosophy, namely philosophical thinking about religion. It seeks to analyze concepts such as religion, God, salvation, worship, creation, sacrifice, immortality of soul, eternal life, etc. and to determine the nature of religious utterances in comparison with those of everyday life, scientific discovery, morality and the imaginative expression of human desires and creativity The role of religion in providing values, guidelines, and example of human existence that are important to organize interactions in societies and human lives.

We see that there are many religions in our society like Hinduism, Islam, Jainaism, Christianity, Buddhism and so on. All religions are different in name but their teaching and goals are almost similar. In external aspect different religions are varied but the inner imports and teachings of them are almost same.

We think, Sufism is an inevitable part of Islamic culture where the difference of various religions are negligible. They believe in humanism, which they claim as an essential part of each and every religion.

Thus, I am deeply interested to pursue research on this subject. Many people, both Muslims and non-Muslims, consider “Sufism” as alien to Islam. But Sufism is not a separate religion, Sufism is a movement within Islam. According to Prof. A.J.Arberry Sufism is an attempt of individual Muslim to realize Allah through their personal experience. It has been defined by Dr. Tara Chand as -it(Sufism) is like a stream which gathers volume by the joining of tributaries from many lands. Its original source is the Quran and the life of Hadrat Muhammad. Christianity

and neo-Platonism swelled it by a large contribution. Hinduism and Buddhism supplied a number of ideas and the religions of ancient Persian, Zoroastrianism, Islam etc. brought to it their share. Sufism lays special impetus to practice their devotion through love. The view of Davis is that "Sufism is essentially a religion of love without a creed or dogma. On the contrary according to Abul Hussain Annuri, "Sufism is love with God and disdain towards the world."

Sufism is a mystical aspect of Islam. To origins of the word 'Sufi' has been suggested commonly the root of the word is traced "*Suf"*(wool) and the inner import of it is '*safa*' which is Arabic means "purity". Sufism worked for purification of the human soul by cleansing the spiritual heart (*qalb)* to give it a major like transparency for the reflection of Almighty's love. As one of the mystic corollaries of Islam, Sufism helped to illuminate the spirit (*ruh*) by emptying it of egoist drives and filling it with Allah's attributes through deep meditation (*dhikr*), and also to complete the journey of life with absolute purification.

During the medieval period one of the major factors of Islam is an impact of Islamic brotherhood in the subcontinent and creating predominantly Muslim influence in India and specially some parts of Bangladesh was the spiritual and human influence of Sufism. The influence of the enlightened Sufis who devoted their major efforts in developing the spiritual dimension of the Bengali minds. Sufis led a very pious and simple life and sacrificed comfort and pleasures, cut off all kinds of worldly bonds, and dedicated their lives to the cause of Islam and for the service of humanity. Their way of living attracted many people to follow their teachings.

Others think that "Sufis were called Sufis only because they are in the first rank before God, through the elevation of their desires towards him, the turning of their hearts unto Him and the staying of their secret parts before Him."

Thus Sufism is a purely Islamic discipline which builds up the character and inner life of the Muslims by imposing certain ordinances and duties, moral obligations and impositions which may not be abandoned in any way by any man.

Sufis followed some main principles to popularize Islam. These are 1. Repenting for misdeeds and emptying of self-orientation 2.Living simple lives 3.Focusing on the sovereignty and accessibility of God 4.Taking vow to possess nothing other than what is needed as daily

necessities 5.Practicing self-discipline 6.Being grateful for the mercies of God 7.Fearing of God 8.Acquiring and filling by divine nature 9.Being content with one's spiritual stature and 10.submitting to the divine will.

Muslims have used the word '*Tasawwuf*' to identify the practice of Sufis. According to the traditional Sufis *Tasawwuf* is an aspect of Islam similar to Islamic law *(Shariah*). According to them just as Shariah governs the external and outer world, to rid its evil and purity, similarly *Tasawwuf* should govern the internal of spiritual world to rid the internal world of evil and purity. *Tasawwuf* is consider by these people as Inseparable from Islam and an integral part of Islamic belief and practice. Therefore Sufism is the mystical aspect of Islam which depends basically upon the mystical activities (*karamat*) and pure love surrender and dedication to the supreme authority Allah. This part of Sufism resemble mostly to the Hindu Bhakti tradition viz. the Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Vedanta philosophy etc. in many ways.

As per Sufi beliefs the teacher is utmost important to awaken religious spirituality in a student's heart .it is the transmission of divine light from the teachers heart to the heart of the student .Many Sufi beliefs that to reach the highest leaves of success in Sufism typically requires that the disciple live with and serve the teacher for a large period of time. This way of serving the teacher resembles the Hindu traditions of guruseva, gurucharan *(pada*) seva of the Santana methodology. Sufi masters taught monotheism (the oneness of Allah), the teachings of Holy Quran and the Hadith to their followers. Before the advent of the Sufis, most of the local population was either Hindu or Buddhist, Sufis were able to convert many of them to Islam by preach about the magnanimity of the religion and the essence of love, brotherhood and equality. The indomitable zeal and uncommon piety of the Sufis and the wide belief that they could perform miracles were the prime causes of the success of the Sufi mission in Bengal. Their zeal was so great that it could not be curbed or cheeked by the atrocities of the ruling monarchs.

The earliest record of Sufism in Bengal goes back to $11^{th}$ century AD in connection with the continuation of Sufism in northern India. Shah Sultan Rumi was the first Sufi to come Bengal, when he came to Mymensingh in 1053 AD. Subsequently, Baba Adam Shah Shahid came to Dhaka in 1119 AD and Shayekh Jalaluddin Tabrizi, more popularly known as Hazrat shah Jalal, arrived in Sylhet in 1225 AD.

Sufism, sense the years of its evolution has been developed through of major four Silsilahs: (a). Chisti.(b). Qadri.(c). suhrawardi.(d). Naksbandi. Scholars claim Ali Ibn Abitalib to began the first tradition of Sufism .Ali is considered to be the 'father of Sufism 'in Islamic tradition. Moreover Junayd of Baghdad regarded Ali as the Sheikh of the principles and practices of Sufism. The Sufis considers Prophet Muhammad as the prime personality of spiritual greatness. The prophet has historically been and remains an integral aspect of Sufi belief and practice and he spent large time in deep meditation at Cave Hira.

According to Sufism the *tariqa* the 'path' on which the mystics walk, has been defined as the path which comes out of the *Shariah* (Islamic laws). It leads the adept, called *'salik'* or 'wayfarer' in his *'suluk'* or 'road' through different stations *'Maqamat'* until he reaches his goal. The perfect '*Tawhid'* with the confession that God is one.

The main aim of Sufism is to clean the lower self called the *qalb* or spiritual heart, and a sprit or soul called *ruh*. Sufism has the attributes of Sacrifice, devotion, peace, charity, purification etc. some kinds of faith and fasts and physical exercise like yoga(*Dhikr*) are also observed they lead their lives out of serious religious faith and belief. They focus on supernatural powers and sensibility. They also lay emphasis on the emotional analysis of the Quran and Hadith. Love and purity are the central idea of Sufism and Islam as well. They also attached deeply to the oneness of God (*Tauhid*) and Hindu(*Ekeswarwada*), Muslim brotherhood specially preached and practiced by the Sufis. Their motto is to establish peace, harmony and brotherhood and maintain integrity the various religious and different groups of the world. The position of teacher is utmost important in Sufism through which they can attain salvation. As per Sufi mythology the guru is called as 'peer' or '*Khawjah'*. The centre of their devotional practices is called as '*Dargah*' or '*Khanqah'*. The followers of Sufism are called as *'Faqir* or '*Darvesh'.*

**Ideology and Psychology of the Sufis:**

The ideology and psychology of the Muslims of Bengal can be analyzed from various points of view 1. Muslims as upholders of Islam increased their followers through conversion 2. Muslims as rulers of Bengal fought against the Hindus and at the same time took the help of the Hindus for consolidating and maintaining their rule 3. Muslims as dwellers treated the Hindus as neighbors and sometimes friendly and sometimes belligerent relations could be seen among the

Hindus and Muslims at mass level. From medieval Bengali literature we can cite incidents of both Hindu-Muslim conflicts and cooperative friendly relations. Socio-economic condition and necessity of life compelled Hindus and Muslims to reject conflict, violence and antagonism and recognize the need to settle their disputes through negotiation and mutual understanding.

While the social and religious condition of the people was caste divided, the Sufis came here carrying with them the egalitarian message of Islam. Because of their strong belief in Allah, and theoretical and practical teachings of universal brotherhood, Sufis could easily satisfy the spiritual cravings of the masses. The activities of the Sufis and their inherent qualities made them familiar to the masses, who were already groaning under social tyranny and suffering from the agony of spiritual yearnings of the soul. They gathered around the saintly preachers known as Sufis and readily left their old faith and took up the new one.

The Sufis did not make any distinction between a convert Muslim and a born Muslim. Their *Khanqah* were opened for everyone. They offered the masses a golden opportunity to raise their social status and to satisfy their hearts by the adoption of a simple and easily understandable creed like Islam.

The bulk of the folk poetry written by Sufis was sung by village women while engaged in varies household chores are the sign of inter-religious understanding both Muslim and non- Muslim sing or rid jointly. In Bengal specially satya peer,Manik peer, Badar peer, Hazi Ali, and most leading Sufis are adored all section of people still today in India. The most common types included literature, the chakki-nama, so called because it was sung while grinding food grains at the grindstone or chakki, and the charkha-nama, sung while spinning thread at the spinning wheel or charkha. Other types of such folk poetry included the lun-nama or lullaby, the shadi-nama or weeding song , the suhagan-nama or married women's song, and the suhaita or eulogistic song. It is evident that most of these poetic forms appealed to women.

One important reason that Sufis wrote the literature and worked for the promotion of education irrespective of cast, creed and religion. Apart from their general desire to expand their teaching among a constituency of commoners, was the object of securing for themselves the role of mediator between God and the people who used the literature. The above- quoted charkha-nama : 'You are a maid- servant in your dervish's house. Say Allah and the Prophet's name on

every breath.' All available evidence indicates that a sizable nonelite constituency clustered around famous Pirs, believing in their miraculous powers (*karamat* ) and their ability to intercede with God, taking blessing from them, lighting candles at the *Dargahs*, or tombs, of departed Peers and participating in festivals at the *Darghas*. This was the outer circle of a Peer's followings, as distinguished from his inner circle of murids, or initiates, and it was to this outer circle that the folk literature seems especially to have appealed, serving as the litany of what may be called Indian folk Islam.

The Sufis borrowed a lot of impacts from India. These were (A) Religious Impact: majority of initial Sufi saints were liberal in their attitude. Their efforts led to lessening of religious fanaticism in India. Many Hindus were followers of Sufi saints and often visited their *Khanqah*. After the death of many Sufi saints their devoted followers got their Samadhis constructed which later developed into places of pilgrimage. These places are not only important as places of pilgrimage but also architecturally e.g the *Dargah* of khawjah Moinuddin Chisti in Ajmer and tomb of Nizamuddin Aulia in Delhi have a special place in architecture. Sufi saints believed in unity of God which led to removal of mutual differences among the people.

(B) Social Impact: Sufi saints criticized social evils and instructed their followers to serve the poor, the disabled or orphans and widows in the society. Sufi saints asked their followers to cultivate good behavior and liberal attitude. They tried to reform the moral character attitude of the people. They got big grants from states, which they spent for the poor and asked their devotees and followers also to give grants liberally. These efforts promoted a spirit of grant, sacrifice etc. in the society. Many Delhi sultans opened orphanages, women service centres etc. at the instance of the Sufi saints. Sufi saints led to a decrease the social evils like communalism and casteism. Human and moral qualities were promoted in people.

(C)Cultural Impact: Along with the propaganda of Sufism many *Dargahs* were constructed which lead to progress in architectural sphere. As has been mentioned earlier, tomb of Nizamuddin Aulia and Dargah of Nizamuddin Chishti are important architectural contributions. Sufi saints popularized music and songs . Many Sufi saints composed literary works in many languages. Among the disciples of Nizamuddin Aulia main were Amir Khusro and Amir Hasan Dehlvi. Khusro composed many poetic works including historical romances. He experimented with many political styles and invented a new Persian style which came to be called 'Sabak-i-

Hindi'or the Indian style. Sufi saints like Malik Muhammad Jayasi of Jaunpur wrote his work in Hindi.

In many societies, particularly in communities in the united states and in Islamic countries, religion plays a major role in creating cohesion and social identity. Providing foundations for values, ethics, or the legal system, religion has a strong normative function in these societies. At the same time, however, religious issues and sensitivities cause conflicts and misunderstandings. All this make it necessary to reflect on the problems and possibilities of interreligious understanding.

Interreligious understanding also referred to as interfaith dialogue, is about people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences. The term refers to cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions (i.e. faiths) at both the individual and institutional level. Each party remains true to their own beliefs while respecting the right of the other to practice faith freely.

Interfaith dialogue is not just words or talk. It includes human interaction and relationships. It can take place between individuals and communities and on many levels. For example, between neighbours in schools and in our places of work. It can take place in both formal and informal settings. In India Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jaina, Buddha and so on. Many religions are live in the same streets; use the same shops, buses, and schools. Normal life means that we come into daily contact with each other. Understanding therefore, is not just something that takes place on an official or academic level only it is part of daily life during wich different cultural and religious groups interact with each other directly, and where tension between them are the most tangible.

Above this religious problems are the main problems in our society. So my aims to achieve religious understanding is possible if we follow the following methods that can be done in my research work:

1. Increase mutual understanding and good relations.
2. Identify causes of tensions in various religions view and their relations. these are often economic, social or political rather than religions activities or view.

3. Build understanding and confidence to overcome or prevent tensions.
4. Break down the barriers and stereotypes which lead to distrust suspicion and bigotry.

For the convenience of my research I will confined my work in the following chapters:

**Introduction :**

**Chapter-1**

Sufism: Origin & Development.

**Chapter -2**

Sufism in India.

**Chapter-3**

Fundamental principles and Orders of Sufism in India.

**Chapter-4**

Sufi Khanqas & Dargahs and their roles in India to maintain Inter-religious Understanding.

**Chapter-5**

A Comparative Study of Sufism and other Religions of India.

**Conclusion:**

World society today is facing the problem regarding religious harmony. This is tension among religious communities which some times results in communal violence & riots. We know that there are many religions in the world. It is true that there are certain undesirable tendencies which make them look down upon, or nurture hatred against other religions. My thesis paper is an attempt to analyzing and understanding the causes of disharmony, and also finding out the solution through reason for the peaceful co-existence of the people. So that present we can philosophical foundation of a multi religion society in the acceptance of the transcendental unity and phenomenal plurality of religions.

Finally since peace is the goal of inter-religious understanding. The process must be peaceful. It is important to realize that peace is not easily achieved and maintained. The process may be peaceful but it is somewhat like climbing Everest. Peace does not occur in a day and these are obstacles as intrepid travelers struggle up the path to heights where the human spirit may soar. Religious moral values and practices can help us to maintain our religious and social integration and I do believe that Sufism can helps us to reach that goal.

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